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enlarging the stock of materials, for the study of the antiquities of the English language. It is to be regretted that so little of the Old Testament has as yet been retrieved.

The eyes of the learned world are on the researches which Mr. Maio is now making in the Vatican; and if their importance be to that of his discoveries at Milan, in the proportion of the stores in these two libraries, we may almost hope to go behind the Alexandrian canon, and recover works not only now lost, but nearly so in the early centuries of the christian era.

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ART. XXII.—*Inquiry into the Relation of Cause and Effect.*  
*By Thomas Brown, M. D. F. R. S. Edinburgh, &c. Pro-*  
*fessor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh.*  
 Third edition. Edinburgh, 1818. 8vo, pp. 569.

A WHOLE article of solid metaphysics is a phenomenon, that perhaps requires apology, as well as explanation. We will therefore briefly submit our reasons for its appearance.

The philosophy of the late lamented Dr. Brown is scarcely known in this country. It was presumed that considerable interest would attach among us to the speculations of the successor of Dugald Stewart, whose own work on the Mind has passed, we believe, through as many editions in the United States as in Great Britain, and who is well known, on becoming *emeritus*, to have warmly recommended Dr. Brown to the chair of moral philosophy in the university of Edinburgh. But farther, there is a vague belief among those who are but partially acquainted with the nature of the late professor's speculations, that they coincided too nearly with the dangerous parts of the philosophy of David Hume. A faithful analysis of the work before us will correct this error, and redeem Dr. Brown's reputation. Still further, an unjust and indiscriminate censure has overwhelmed the whole system of Hume itself with relation to the doctrine of Cause and Effect. When Professor Leslie, in consequence of having expressed his approbation of certain portions of that system, encountered from the ministers of Edinburgh strong opposition to his pretensions as candidate for a chair in the university, the nucleus of the present volume was published in a pamphlet form, and by distinguishing what was sound from

what was exceptionable in the opinion of Hume, contributed to soften the opposition made to the too honest candidate. The work, in its present very much enlarged state, confirms the points maintained in the pamphlet, and though we profess no love, and but qualified respect for Hume in his metaphysical capacity, we are willing to assist in removing every unfair stigma from every literary reputation. Besides these reasons, the subject itself, we should hope and presume, however abstruse, will not be deemed entirely devoid of interest and importance. Truth is worth looking after, even among the clouds. A bulky octavo is not written in vain, if it gives the world one clear idea, which it would not have otherwise had. The subject of this work, as the author truly remarks, involves the philosophy of every thing that exists in the universe. Hence it must have some practical bearings. Some portions of the treatise before us might be aptly denominated the philosophy of religion. Considerable light is thrown on our relations with the Deity; the idea of our dependence on him is somewhat simplified from that dark and confused mystery which hangs over it; and the clearer the idea, the deeper and better the impression it must make on the mind. The system under review provides also for the admission of the miraculous interference of the Deity, and therefore bespeaks the attention of the lovers of revelation; it admits of the doctrine of a particular providence, and must therefore be not unwelcome to the devout. In addition to these reasons, we considered that the race of lovers of pure old-fashioned metaphysical disquisition is far from being extinct. Edwards on the Will is still the principal rallying point of our orthodoxy, and Locke\* is a general classic among our colleges. The influence of their style and speculations will make us sure of some zealous readers. In the next place, this book is a book of great power. Those who read Montorio, Mandeville, Anastasius, Don Juan, for the intellectual energy they display, may here find intellectual energy enough, and not be

\* Is not a *System of Metaphysics* wanted for our colleges? Something like a history of opinions in that science, with or without the theories of the compiler. Would Locke obtain more than a respectable chapter in such a system? Brunck, Stewart in his Dissertations, and Degerando would furnish copious and valuable assistance in compiling it. The work of the latter is indeed an admirable specimen of what we recommend.

liable to the suspicion of seeking amusement from the narrative, or gratifying their corruption with the sentiments. Lastly, the improbability that the book will be ever published in this country, united with the high price of the English edition, induced us to present the ensuing careful abstract to those who may not have access to the original work ; while those who have, may be glad of a thread to lead them through a book, which for the abstruseness of its topics, for refinement in its reasonings, for diffusive amplifications, for winding yet collateral digressions, for long and solemn preambles before the questions discussed are stated, thus creating the suspense of mind which is incident properly to forms of synthetical demonstration, has not many rivals ; and yet has no titles to its chapters, no sketch-arguments, no table of contents, no indexes !

Part First of the ‘Inquiry’ treats of the *Real Import* of Cause and Effect.

*A cause, Dr. Brown defines to be, that which immediately precedes any change, and which existing at any time in similar circumstances, has been always, and will be always, immediately followed by a similar change.* The object of his Inquiry is to prove, that there is no hidden, mysterious, connecting link between those antecedents and consequents, which we call causes and effects, when we speak of the changes which happen in any part of the material or intellectual universe. The substances that exist in nature are *every thing* that has a real existence in nature. These substances have no *powers*, *properties*, nor *qualities*, separate from themselves,—words adopted by us only for the sake of convenience, and to express the *changes* which we observe to happen around us. A follows B, and B follows C. Now by all the effort which our minds can exert, we can form no idea of any thing in these sequences, but the substances A, B, and C, and the sequence itself. We may say, that fire has the *power* of melting metals, but all we mean, or all we know by it, is, that fire melts metals, which expresses only the two substances, fire and metal, and the change, called melting, which takes place between them. The above abstract terms are indeed of great use in assisting us to avoid circumlocution in our discourse ; but we are apt to forget, (and Dr. Brown has pretty well forgotten) that they are mere abstractions, and to regard them as significant of some actual reality. The powers of a substance

have been supposed to be something very different from the changes which it operates on other substances, and most mysterious ; at once a part of the antecedent, and yet not a part of it ; an intermediate link in a chain of physical sequences, that is yet itself no part of the chain, of which it is notwithstanding said to be a link. The most that can be said of these imaginary powers or causes is, that they are new antecedents and sequents thrust in between the former, and requiring themselves as much explanation as the changes which they were brought to explain.

Such we believe to be the substance of Dr. Brown's first section of twenty pages. His elegant paragraphs, his varied and ample illustrations, his occasionally appropriate and eloquent reflections, and even many of his collateral arguments and inferences, though important, must of course disappear before the rugged wand of analysis. We hope, however, yet to find room for the extraction of a few of his more splendid and elaborate passages.

Before proceeding with our abstract, we think proper to notice an obvious objection which has been frequently urged against the foregoing definition of a cause, and to extract our author's reply to it, though occurring in a distant part of his book. If the definition be true, it is asked, why are not day and night reciprocally the cause of each other ? Dr. Reid calculated on a great triumph over Hume by pressing this objection. The Quarterly Review, we observe, has repeated it in an article on Leslie's Geometry. (No. VII) and a late number of Blackwood's Magazine, in attempting to defend the incessant attacks of the editors on Mr. Leslie's reputation, has brought it forward again. We shall subsequently, in some strictures of our own upon the definition in question, attempt to show that this objection, and all of the same class, might with great ease have been obviated, if the notion of contiguity in place, as well as proximity in time, had been introduced into the definition. Here, however, we will let our author speak for himself.

‘ It should be remembered that *day* and *night* are not words which denote two particular phenonena, but are words invented by us to express long series of phenomena. What various appearances of nature, from the freshness of the first morning-beam, to the last soft tint that fades into the twilight of the evening sky,

changing with the progress of the seasons, and dependent on the accidents of temperature, and vapour, and wind, are included in every day ! These are not one, because the word which expresses them is one ; and it is the believed relation of physical events, not the arbitrary combinations of language, which Mr. Hume professes to explain.

‘ If, therefore, there be any force in the strange objection of Dr. Reid, it must be shown, that notwithstanding the customary conjunction, we do not believe the relation of cause and effect to exist, between the successive *pairs* of that multitude of events which we denominate night and day. What then are the great events included in those terms ? If we consider them philosophically, they are the series of positions in relation to the sun, at which the earth arrives in the course of its diurnal revolution ; and in this view, there is surely no one who doubts that the motion of the earth immediately before sunrise is the cause of the subsequent position, which renders that glorious luminary visible to us. If we consider the phenomena of night and day in a more vulgar sense, they include various degrees of darkness and light, with some of the chief changes of appearance in the heavenly bodies. Even in this sense, there is no one who doubts, that the rising of the sun is the cause of the light which follows it, and that its setting is the cause of the subsequent darkness.

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How often, during a long and sleepless night, does the sensation of darkness,—if that phrase may be accurately used to express a state of mind that is merely exclusive of visual affections of every sort,—exist, without being followed by the sensation of light ! We perceive the gloom, in this negative sense of the term *perception* ;—we feel our own position in bed, or some bodily or mental uneasiness, which prevents repose ;—innumerable thoughts arise, at intervals, in our minds, and with these the perception of gloom is occasionally mingled, without being followed by the perception of light. At last light is perceived, and, as mingled with all our occupations and pleasures, is perceived innumerable times during the day, without having, for its immediate consequence, the sensation of darkness. Can we then be said to have an uniform experience of the conjunction of the two sensations ; or do they not rather appear to follow each other loosely and variously, like those irregular successions of events, which we denominate accidental ? In the vulgar, therefore, as well as in the philosophical sense of the terms, the regular alternate recurrence of day and night furnishes no valid objection to that theory, with the truth of which it is said to be inconsistent.’ p. 387.

The second section [the sections have no titles] appears to urge two points ; first, that the sort of antecedence, which is necessary to be understood in our notion of power or causation, is not mere priority, but *invariable* priority. In the unbounded field of nature there are many co-existing series of phenomena. Just at the moment when the fire melts the metal, the hand may move the metal. In this case it may be said that the motion of the hand immediately precedes, or is an antecedent to the melting of the metal, but would not in fact be called the cause of it. *Fire* alone *invariably* precedes such a change, and is thus called its cause. So the sun may rise immediately before the tide rises, but the want of universal invariableness in this sequence prevents us from ascribing to it the relation of cause and effect. These illustrations we have ventured of ourselves, the author having strangely introduced none on this most important point, though he could have selected so many, at once rich and impressive, from the wide regions of nature. The second point is an argument in favour of the author's peculiar notion of power ; an argument which he calls the *test of identity*, and relies upon it with much confidence. It is this. How much soever our former habits of thought, or, as the author would have it, our former abuse of language, may lead us to suppose that there is really such a thing as *power*, which operates any change, exclusively of the substances involved in the very change itself, yet the longer we attend to it, and the more nicely and minutely we endeavour to analyse it, the more clearly shall we perceive, that all which we have ever understood, in the notion which we have been accustomed to express with so much pomp of language, is the mere sequence of a certain change, that might be expected to follow as immediately at another time, when the same antecedent recurred in the same circumstances. Thus, when we say that a spark has the *power* of kindling and exploding gunpowder, we say no more and no less than that in all similar circumstances the explosion of gunpowder will be the immediate and uniform consequence of the application of a spark. And because these two propositions communicate the same identical information, the author maintains that the idea of power in the first proposition is perfectly nugatory, or rather, is a non-entity.

Section third applies the foregoing arguments to all the mental phenomena. We wish to move our limbs, and they

move at our bidding. Here is a sequence, and nothing more—not an atom of power ! There is in the first place a desire to move the hand. This is one phenomenon. There is then the motion of the hand, that is to say, the contraction of certain muscles. Thus, reader, you see how magically the author makes the power, which John Locke was pleased to confer on you, slip down into nothing between these two phenomena. If you doubt it, he calls for his *test of identity*, and asks, should we learn any thing new, by being told that the will would not only be invariably followed by the motion of the hand, but that the will would also have the *power* of moving the hand ? He then proceeds to explain the illusion under which the world has been labouring from time immemorial. It seems we have all along supposed such a thing to exist as the will. It is a mistake ; there is no such thing. A volition is but a momentary desire. Nature has so disposed of things around us, that innumerable of our desires are always followed immediately by their objects ; of which the infinite varieties of contractions of the muscles in every part of the body are instances. If your desire of wealth were followed by one hundred thousand pounds as immediately as your desire of elevating the eye-lid is followed by that muscular motion, you would call that desire, will. So, if your will to move a palsied hand were followed by the obstinate quiescence of that hand, your will, with all its boasted energy, its illusive power, would degenerate into, or rather would remain simple desire. Now it is the rapidity with which the state of things about us has permitted certain changes to follow *some* of our desires and not others, that has led us to ascribe to the former a mysterious quality called power, and to give them a specific name. But the author's acute analysis would seem to reduce into one the two operations of will and desire, and thus to demonstrate that, in all our voluntary actions, there is nothing more than a simple sequence of two phenomena, viz. the will, or a momentary desire, of exactly the same kind with all our other desires—and the external act. On this head, the author successfully combats the common sophism that the will and the desire may be opposed to each other, and exist so at the same moment of time. When a compassionate judge condemns a criminal to death, he does not at one and the same moment will the criminal's death, and desire his life ; the final will to utter the awful award of



punishment *succeeds* his compassionate desire, and arises from his belief of a greater good upon the whole which will result from a severe decree. And so of all analogous cases. Be it understood, however, that the author has no quarrel against the term will ; he allows it to be convenient for the purpose of expressing such of our desires as are immediately followed by their objects ; but he will not allow it to express any thing more than desire, nor to involve a peculiar notion of power or energy which it has always been supposed to possess.

The next question, into which the author enters with equally unthinking intrepidity, is, whether what is called the will has any power over the thoughts, or trains of thought, or any states or affections of the mind. To will directly the conception of any particular, is, surely, to have already the conception of that object ; for if we do not know what we will, we truly will nothing. To will directly any idea, therefore, is a contradiction in thought, and almost in terms. The author shows also that it is not less absurd to suppose that we can directly will the non-existence of any idea, since our desire to do so would rather render it more lively. Nor is there such a power as indirect volition, or calling up any particular idea by others which we know to be associated in place or time ; for if we can effectively will the associated ideas, we can as easily will the unknown idea itself. The fact is, we do not *call up* any of these ideas ; but our *desire* of remembering something once told to us, or which once happened to us, &c. *continuing*, the natural order of associate ideas suggests itself, till sooner or later, the unknown idea of which we were in quest takes its turn to present itself to our mental view. If the preceding views of these mental phenomena be correct, what becomes of the idea of that *power*, which has been always ascribed to the *will* ?

Some have asserted, however, [we now go on with section fourth] that from mind alone we derive our notion of power ; and that the notion which we thus acquire by the consciousness of our own exertion is afterwards transferred to the apparent changes of matter. This is Mr. Locke's theory. He supposes that when we voluntarily operate any change, we are conscious of exerting *power*, and thus when we see a loadstone attract, or produce a change on iron, we from the analogy of our feelings ascribe power to the loadstone. But if the arguments of the preceding section be right, we have

*nothing to transfer* from our own feelings to the operations of matter. We desire the motion of our arm ; the arm moves ; there is nothing but antecedent and consequent here. So, when the loadstone approaches the iron, the iron moves ; here too is antecedent and consequent. In neither case is there a third substance, or a third any thing, to be called power. If we have any thing to transfer from our own feelings to the motion of the iron, it is desire, which is about as reasonable as to transfer to our own feelings the idea of a moving loadstone. Again, Mr. Hume supposes that the animal *nisus*, which we experience, enters very much into the common idea of the power of one material substance on another. But the author shews by a copious, elaborate, and beautiful induction, that the universal tendency both of vulgar and scientific minds is never to illustrate the operations of material substances by analogies drawn from mind, but on the contrary, only to illustrate the operations of mind by analogies drawn from matter. Hence, Mr. Hume's idea is opposed to universal experience. The section is concluded by a most eloquent, and, as we think, triumphant attack upon that imperfect analysis, which has led philosophers to term matter *inert*, as capable only of *continuing* changes, and to distinguish mind alone as active, and capable of *beginning* changes. If mind often act upon matter, as often does matter act upon mind. The truth is, that certain changes of mind invariably precede certain other changes of mind, and certain changes of matter certain other changes of matter, and also that certain changes of mind invariably precede certain changes of matter, and certain changes of matter invariably precede certain changes of mind. Where then is the advantage of one over the other in point either of inertness or activity ? Is it in the *motion* which mind produces on matter ? But matter, on its part, produces *sensation* in mind. Even the apparent *rest* of matter, which the author clearly shews is the foundation of our mistaken notion of its inertness, is a sort of action rather than repose. The particles of the seemingly quiescent mass are all attracting and attracted, repelling and repelled ; and even the smallest undistinguishable element is modifying by its joint instrumentality the planetary motions of our own system, and is performing a part, which is perhaps essential to the harmony of the whole universe of worlds. So much for the supposed

inertness of matter, and for the origin of all our idea of power in the mind alone.

Section Fifth. That original energy—the Omnipotent—the Cause of causes—is the subject of this sublime and unequalled section. But it is only physically that we are here brought to consider the divine power, although in passing, the author pays, to the dignity and interest of our moral relations with that being, a tribute, which could have been dictated only by a mind deeply imbued with the most genuine living piety. The author firmly believes in the original dependence of all events on the great Source of Being; his conviction is equally strong that he is the providential Governor of the world; but he maintains that God, the creator, and God, the providential governor of the world, are not necessarily God, the *immediate* producer of *every* change. To suppose that he is himself the real operator and the only operator of every change, is to suppose that the universe, which he has made, exists for no purpose. In fact, we have ourselves long believed, that so far from derogating from the glory of our Creator, it actually increases it, to suppose that he has communicated to matter those qualities and laws, which produce most of the events that take place throughout creation. The stretch of power, and height of wisdom in this view, if we may dare to compare what is every way infinitely above us, are greater than would be displayed in his universal and immediate interference. Yet it has long been, and is still, the general belief of philosophers, that beside the physical causes comprehended in the antecedents of those consequences which appear as effects throughout the world, there is an efficient cause, that in every case is different from them, and necessary for the production of the effect; an invisible something, which connects each particular consequent with its particular antecedent, or rather is in every case the sole efficient of it. This efficient cause the Cartesians considered to be the Divine Being alone. That idea is now generally exploded; yet still the imaginary efficient cause is retained, though with a less reverend appropriation. Against this theory our author contends that, even if you allow its truth, it only introduces a new operator in every change, it only lengthens a sequence of physical phenomena, and does not produce any thing different from a sequence of regular antecedents and consequents. A is invariably fol-

lowed by C, and I therefore say that A is the cause of C. But you would insert something between, and say that B is the real efficient cause of C. But what do you thereby gain? Have you discovered something between A and C, which did not appear to me? If you have, you have only analysed a complex phenomenon more perfectly than I, and I am ready to acknowledge the new link of connexion. If you have discovered no such link, but only suppose it, then, whether it be material or spiritual, visible or invisible, you have still to explain how your new cause produces the existing effect, and are driven back to the author's own definition and idea of a cause, founded on the uniform precession of one event to another, and nothing more. Nor will you gain the least triumph over the author, by appealing from his definition to the supposed constant interference of the Deity in every change that exists; for, to say nothing of the utter uselessness, the idle, aimless, cumbrous existence of matter, which this appeal supposes, or the blasphemy involved in making the material objects of creation to be as it were only necessary *remembrances* for the Deity when and where he should act, the author is ready to meet you on your own ground, and he comes prepared with no other weapon than his own simple definition and idea of power or causation. In all those cases, he demands, in which the direct agency of the Supreme Being is indubitably to be believed, *even in that greatest of all events, when the universe arose at his will*, what notion are we capable of forming of such a change? And are we to consider that highest energy to be different in *nature* as well as in *degree*, from the humble delegated energies, which are operating around us? The author strenuously contends that we are not so to consider it, and that if we rise to the strongest conception of the omnipotence of God, of which we are capable, still, in contemplating it, we only consider his will as the *direct antecedent* of those glorious effects which the universe displays. This sublime and simple idea he shows to be entirely compatible with our highest conceptions of the intelligence, wisdom, benevolence, free choice, and glory of the Supreme Being, and that, to interpose an imaginary link, an intermediacy figment, whether we call it by the name of power or any thing else, between the will of God and the effect that darts out of it, so far from elevating, would only diminish the majesty of the person and the scene.

With this magnificent conclusion, Dr. Brown terminates the first part of his inquiry into the relation of cause and effect. We need not say how forcibly the lovers of revelation must be struck at the coincidence of this result with the celebrated description of the creation of light and of the world in the beginning of Genesis. Surely, if nothing more, it is at least an interesting fact in the history of metaphysical philosophy, that during the last hundred and fifty years, and in that portion of the globe in which the Hebraic Scriptures have been universally exposed, and more generally read than any other book ; while busy, restless, and ambitious thinkers without number have agitated their systems and theories ; theologians frowning on philosophers, not so much for refusing to be taught from the bible, as for picking flaws in *their* schemes of divine power and agency ; and philosophers sneering on theologians for defending a book, which happened to contain no trace of their own refined views of the connexion of cause and effect, of power and result ; yet at length, an author, who was equal to any of his predecessors for severe and logical habits of thought, for intellectual education and metaphysical genius, and superior to them in the advantage of coming later into the world ; an author, whose professional duty it was to search for truth among all their systems and theories, and who unquestionably was fully equal to the task of examining, analysing, estimating, and deciding on them ; an author, too, who has carried mere *refinement in reasoning* as far as it was ever carried before ; perhaps but just short of a fault ; has at length finished this vain and tumultuous circle of philosophizing, by coming round to the precise point where Moses began, and demonstrating that the founder of the Jewish polity and literature has at least set out with teaching us an ultimate truth, which he has so beautifully amplified and illustrated in his immediately succeeding emblematical picture of creation. So true it is, that the progress of philosophy, like that of social civilization and genuine refinement, is continually tending in its results to the original dictates of pure and unsophisticated nature.

Of the notes on this part of the Inquiry, it would be unmerciful in us to attempt to convey an idea by means of a detailed abstract. They contain criticisms on Mr. Hume's definition of a cause ; an argument reducing what are called *final causes* to real *prior causes* in the mind of the Deity ; additional con-

siderations to show that the qualities of a substance are not separate from the substance itself; remarks on the universality of a belief, in all ages, of something like an imaginary efficient cause; a long essay on the true nature and in defence of the possibility of miracles against the arguments of Hume, but on principles different from those of all Hume's former opponents, which the author thinks to have been inadequate; another long essay, demonstrating the perfect possibility, but the very high improbability of a particular providence, maintaining the reasonableness of the doctrine, but refuting its necessity; and two or three other notes, which confirm or illustrate some portions of the text. An abstract of the two long essays on miracles and a particular providence, however interesting in themselves to a majority of our readers, might perhaps serve with more propriety as an article for a theological journal.

To those, who have become convinced by the reasonings of the preceding part, the question will naturally occur, how has it happened that the world has been so long deceived? Why that universal concurrence of mankind in every age in supposing certain causes always to exist separately from the substances in which changes are constantly seen to take place? This question is too imposing to be passed over. Accordingly, the author devotes to it the whole of his Second Part, entitled, Of the Sources of Illusion with respect to the Relation of Cause and Effect. We avoid only one error, he tells us, in knowing that we have been deceived; but we may avoid many errors, in knowing how that one has deceived us.

The sources of our error in supposing causes to have an existence separate from the substances which produce any change, are of two kinds; 1st, certain arbitrary forms of language; 2d, the very nature of things.

Under the former head, the author first enumerates *various metaphorical phrases*, which have been employed to express the regularity of the antecedence and consequence of certain phenomena. We speak of events as *connected* or *conjoined*; and we speak of their *bond* of connexion, as if there were something truly intermediate. Now so far as a bond is a sign of *proximity*, so far the word is a very good metaphor to express causation; but inasmuch as it also implies something intermediate between two substances, the frequent use of this metaphor leads to the supposition that the bond connecting two events

is also something intermediate ; and the author with great acuteness remarks, that our very ignorance of any thing, really intervening, will only render more mysterious what, obscure as it may be in our conception, we yet believe not the less to exist. Hence the mystery which is often attached to efficient causes, so called.

Another way, in which our language tends to deceive us in this respect, is the necessity which we are under of having some terms to express invariable sequence, and others to express casual sequence. Now it so happens that we have rigidly appropriated cause and effect to express the former, and priority, succession, and other terms for the latter. For convenience's sake, we never confound them. We use the word *cause* so exclusively to express the great circumstance of invariableness, while the word *sequence* or its concrete, *to follow*, is so often used to express mere casual succession, that they assume to our minds the appearance of essential dissimilarity and even opposition, so that we revolt when we come to hear the words cause and sequence coupled together as synonymous ; a feeling, which the addition of the important qualifying adjective *invariable* to the latter is not able wholly to remove.

There is yet another form of verbal influence, in some of the most common unavoidable modes of grammatical construction, which seems to have greatly favoured the mistake in question. When, in compliance with the analytical forms of grammar, we speak continually of the powers *of* a substance, or of substances that *have* certain powers, in the same manner as we are accustomed to speak of the birds *of* the air, of the fish *of* a river, of a park that *has* a large stock of deer, or of a town that *has* a multitude of inhabitants, we gradually learn to consider the power *of* a substance, or the power which a substance *possesses*, as something different from the substance itself, inherent in it, indeed, but inherent as something that may yet subsist separately. And here follows one of the author's very happiest, though quite characteristic illustrations. Indeed, though but an illustration, it almost carries in itself the appearance of a triumphant argument. In the ancient philosophy, he observes, this error extended to the notions both of form and power. In the case of form, however, though the illusion lasted for many ages, it did at length cease ; and no one now regards the figure of a

body as any thing but the body itself. It is probable that the similar illusion with respect to power, as something different from the substances that are said to possess it, would in like manner have ceased and given way to juster views ; if there had not been, in the very nature of things, many circumstances of still more powerful influence, to favor the illusion in its origin, and foster and perpetuate it.

These circumstances, therefore, will next deserve our consideration.

The first is the seeming latency of power, at times when it is said to be not exerted. We say that there is in cold, unkindled fuel a latent power of liquefying steel ; that a man has the power of moving his arm, whenever he chooses to move it ; and so forth. With these expressions, as popular and convenient forms of language, the author finds no fault ; but he argues at much length, and with considerable, though, as we think, just refinement, that they are utterly incompatible with the results of philosophical analysis. What is permanent, in our imagination of objects, may be very far from being permanent, in the objects themselves which are imagined by us. If power, according to the reasoning in the first section of the First Part of this treatise, express nothing more than the changes which actually take place in substances, there is no power in the intervals of what is termed exertion, because there is no change, nor tendency to change. The power, in short, is wholly contingent on certain circumstances, beginning with them, continuing with them, ceasing with them. In the intervals of recurrence of these circumstances, however,—or, to use the ordinary popular language, in the intervals of *exertion* of the supposed latent *power* of a substance,—we may think of the circumstances in which its presence is productive of change : and knowing that, as often as these circumstances recur, the change, too, will recur, we may transfer to the substance, as if permanent in it, what is truly permanent only in our thought, which, in the absence of the circumstances of efficiency, imagines them present. But a very slight attention, surely, ought to be enough to convince us, that it is by our imagination only, we thus invest the substance with a character of continued power, which does not belong to it. For example, a very high temperature is necessary for the liquefaction of steel by wood. Let them lie forever in their natural state in the closest proximity, and the power



of one over the other will be undeniably non-existent. When their circumstances become changed by the application of heat, at that very moment, and not till then, exists the change of fusion, and consequently the power of fusion, which are therefore equally words without meaning, where the necessary temperature is not. Thus also with regard to the supposed latent power which a man has of moving his arm. Is the man who is now before us, who has his limbs all in a quiescent state, with no intention at all stirring in his mind, is he, in fact, one and the very same complex being with *the man who wills* just previously to the motion of his arm? In philosophical strictness, he clearly is not. The addition of the state of volition changes the compound individual, as much as the addition of heat to ice changes that individual substance to water; only in the one case a visible alteration takes place before our eyes, and we give the changed substance a new name and ascribe to it new powers; whereas, in the other case, there is the same living body before us, at different moments, unaffected in its external conformation by the accession of a state of *willing*, although until that change takes place, the ascription to the living being of an actual power to raise its arm is confessedly absurd, since the arm does and must forever lie still, where the will is not. Our error lies in falsely ascribing a unity and sameness of physical character to substances in all the changes of circumstances in which they can be placed, and in consequently referring to them in all circumstances what is only referrible in certain circumstances. Power, then, is not something latent in substances, that exists, whether exercised or not. What is termed the exercise of power, is only another name for the presence of the circumstances, in which, and in which alone, there is the power of which we speak; as power not exerted is the absence of the very circumstances which are necessary to constitute power. Now from this fallacy of believing that the powers which substances *exhibit to us in certain situations* are *latent at all times* in those substances and yet separate from them, arises the error of supposing that there are mysterious *causes* of all the phenomena we behold, constantly latent in the substances around us, and yet distinct from the substances themselves.

The author closes this Second Part by discussing one more great source of the error in question, viz. *the imperfection of*

*our senses.* What at first seems to be the immediate cause of many of our sensations, we afterwards learn is only the first antecedent of a long train of antecedents and consequents, reaching from the outward object to our perceptive faculty, which were at first imperceptible, but which some finer analysis evolves and presents to our search. Hence we are led habitually to suppose, that amid all the changes perceived by us, there is something latent, which links them together, and though concealed from our view at present, may be discovered perhaps by some analytic process, that has not yet been employed. He, who for the first time hears a bell rung, if he be ignorant of the theory of sound, will very naturally suppose, that the stroke of the clapper on the bell is the cause of the sound which he hears. By subsequent analyses, however, he successively arrives at the intermediate operations of—vibrations excited in the particles of the bell itself—the elastic medium of the air—the auditory nerve—the whole mass of the brain. All these phenomena, from the imperfection of his senses, were taking place before him unobserved. He suspects, therefore, that in phenomena the most familiar to him, there may be, in like manner, other changes that take place before him unobserved, the discovery of which is to be the discovery of a new order of causes. This constant search, this frequent detection of intermediate causes before unknown, irresistibly induces us to suppose that in every case whatever in which we behold the antecedent and consequent of a change, there lies between them a connecting link, a separate cause, yet undiscovered. Yet it is evident, that between the antecedent and consequent which we at present know, we must at length come to some ultimate change, which is truly and immediately antecedent to the known effect. Do we gain any thing by saying, that this last antecedent has the *power* or is the *cause* of producing the last effect? Is it not equivalent to saying simply that it precedes the effect? For the supposition of a bond or a cause in this last sequence is necessarily out of the case. The truth is, we see only parts of the great sequences that are taking place in nature. If our senses had originally enabled us to discern all the minute changes which happen in bodies, if we had never discovered any thing intermediate and unknown between two known events, a *cause*, in our notion of it, would have been very different from that mysterious, unintelligible

something, between entity and nonentity, which we now conceive it to be, or rather, of which we vainly strive to form a conception; and we should have found little difficulty in admitting it to be, what it simply and truly is, only another name for the immediate invariable antecedent of an event.

The object of the Third Part of this inquiry is to explain *under what circumstances* the belief of power arises in the mind. What leads us to suppose that one thing is the necessary cause of another, or in other words, that any particular antecedent, under the same circumstances, is, has been, and always will be, followed by a particular change? This is a highly curious intellectual fact; the observation of a single moment often suggesting to us a belief which extends through all past and all future time.

Power, as we have seen, necessarily involves the expectation of a future change of some sort, that is to be exactly similar, as often as the preceding circumstances are exactly similar.

Is this expectation built on the ground of *experience* only? Does it imply always, that the consequent has been known to us, as well as the antecedent; or is there, in the appearance of the antecedent itself, before the attendant change has even been once observed, what might enable us to anticipate that change, as about to take place in instant succession?—The author decides this question entirely in favour of experience. He shows that we have no knowledge of the qualities of bodies *a priori*, and therefore no knowledge of the effects which they must produce. Nothing, for instance, in the *appearance* of iron or loadstone indicates to us that these two bodies will rush together on being made to approach each other. Neither their colour, nor their hardness, nor any other quality they possess, would suggest such an effect to our minds. Nor is there any thing in the color, weight, and other sensible qualities of grains of mustard-seed and grains of gunpowder, which would enable us to predict, that a spark, which falls and is quenched on a heap of the one, would, if it had fallen on a heap of the other, have raised it into rapid and destructive conflagration. Nay, the most universal and familiar of all phenomena, those namely of gravitation, admit of no readier prophecy. We expect an object to fall to the ground, not from examining its color, or shape, or hardness, but because we have frequently observed the event to hap-

pen. It is the same too with all the phenomena of the mind, except our instincts, where the knowledge is not in us, but in the great Being who formed us. Nothing *a priori* assures us that certain motions of our limbs will follow certain desires of our minds, or that the sight of wretchedness will cause in one breast no emotion, but will melt another into pity. Experience alone teaches us these and all other mental phenomena.

But experience informs us only of the *past*, while the relation of power is one that comprehends the past, the present, and the future. Something else, therefore, besides mere experience, enters into that operation of the mind, which adjudges to any antecedent in a sequence the attribute of power or causation. Is it by a process of *reasoning*, then, that we are enabled, as it were, to see with our mind what is invisible to our eyes, and thus to extend to the unexisting future an order of succession, which, as future, is confessedly, at the time of our prediction, beyond the sphere of our observation? The author maintains that reasoning does not enter at all into the matter, but that it is nothing more than an *intuitive* and irresistible *belief*, which leads us to anticipate the recurrence of the same consequent, following the same antecedent, whenever the circumstances remain unaltered. When we say that B will follow A tomorrow, because A was followed by B today, we do not *prove* that the future will resemble the past, but we *take for granted* that the future will resemble the past. The past fact and the future fact are not inclusive the one of the other, and as little is the proposition which affirms the one inclusive of the proposition which affirms the other. There is no logical absurdity in supposing, that the one proposition might be true, and the other not true; however difficult it may seem to us to believe the one, without believing the other. We may use the *forms* of reasoning in such a case; yet the belief will always be found to be involved in the very process. A chemist may say, that because a certain gas has just extinguished a lighted taper plunged into it, it *therefore* will extinguish it now. This may seem a fair logical enthymeme. But the major proposition is assumed without proof. It is taken for granted that a lighted taper plunged into the gas will always be quenched, which is the very thing that a semblance of reasoning is brought forward to prove. So when we say, that

a loadstone will continue to attract iron, because it is magnetical, there is only a show, and not the reality of reasoning. Belief, and belief unaccounted for, is all that is involved in the whole process; because, as the very term *magnetical* implies the quality of attracting iron, we might as well have said, that iron will attract iron because it will attract iron. Therefore *reasoning* has no concern with the operation of the mind in question.

It is supposed by some, however, and especially by certain mathematical writers, that there are a few exceptions to the conclusion just drawn. They would seem to contend, that there is a class of facts which are capable of being inferred, even before observation or experience, with complete and independent certainty of the result. The inertia of matter, and the phenomena of the composition of forces, and of equilibrium, have been urged, as instances of this kind. The argument of the sufficient reason has been called in to demonstrate these facts, with a triumphant reliance on its perfect adequacy. The following is D'Alembert's argument to prove the inertia of matter as far as it is comprehended in the continued *rest* of bodies. 'A body at rest,' he says, 'must continue in that state, till it be disturbed by some foreign cause; for it cannot determine itself to motion, since there is no reason why the motion should begin in one direction, rather than another'\* 'Since there is *no reason!*' an assumption of the very thing to be proved. To be capable of asserting that there is no reason why the motion should begin in one direction rather than another, is already to possess the largest conceivable measures of experience, to know all the conditions of existing things, with all their mutual influences. What is or is not a sufficient reason, experience, and experience only can shew. We believe, indeed, that a body will not quit its state of rest, if all circumstances remain the same; for this, from the influence of that general law of thought, which directs our physical anticipations of every kind, it is impossible for us not to believe. But if the irresistible force of this general faith be wholly laid out of account, and if, in affirming, that it cannot quit its state of rest and move in one particular direction, our only reason be, that we see no cause why the body should not begin equally to move in some other direction,

\* 'Traité de Dynamique.'

we, in the very supposition that the motion in the particular direction is without a sufficient cause, beg the question, which we yet profess to demonstrate. How can we presume, that we know, at any moment, what physical circumstances may, or may not, be about to determine some particular motion of the body, since we are equally unacquainted with the efficacy or inefficacy of all the circumstances? And if we suppose ourselves to know, previously, the efficacy or sufficiency of some of these circumstances, and the inefficacy or insufficiency of the others, and must therefore know, before any reasoning from the abstract principle, whether a change is or is not to take place, why do we ascribe to the result of the subsequent reasoning the knowledge, which was essential for the understanding of its very conditions or terms?

But our author stops not here. He shews, that the argument of D'Alembert, allowing its force and legitimacy in other respects, does not exhaust all the possible conditions of the case. Is *rest* the only state which a body can assume, even granting that there is no possibility, because there is no reason that it should move one way rather than another? Recollect that the argument is not about a mathematical point, or an elementary atom, but about the bodies which actually exist in nature around us. Why then may not a change take place in the quiescent mass, similar to what we term explosion, when a mass of gunpowder, previously at rest, is kindled? Here there is no particular motion of the elementary particles, east, west, north, or south, but motion in *all these directions*.

The author attacks with equal success a similar argument of D'Alembert with respect to the other case of inertia in bodies, *viz.* their continued motion when no foreign force interferes to put them to rest.

So also with regard to the *uniformity* of their motion; when it is attempted to be demonstrated, that 'the motion must be uniform, *because* a body cannot accelerate nor retard its own motion,' the very point in dispute is obviously taken for granted.

The author wishes it carefully to be remembered that he does not deny the inertia, nor the other properties and phenomena of matter which have been attempted to be made the subjects of abstract demonstration; on the contrary, they appear to him as indubitable, as any other instances of the

regularity of events. He only objects to our supposed power of predicting these facts, independently of experience.

By far the largest section in the book is devoted to strictures on several demonstrations of this kind, given by D'Alembert, Euler, and other mathematicians, who, we apprehend, have been run somewhat too hardly by our acute and ingenious author. It should be recollected, we think, that these writers did not aim at quite such ultimate, abstract, and metaphysical statements of the case, as alone would justify the torrents of argumentation, which are here poured down upon them. They were simply mathematicians. They were engaged in constructing and writing systems of mixed mathematics, in which some general views of matter must necessarily be given, although the principal object of their treatises was only the measurement of quantities. To preserve a scientific form throughout, and indeed to lay a foundation for the whole train of their mathematical reasoning, it was natural that they should throw into theorems, and definitions, and forms of demonstration, against the delusive solemnity of which our author inveighs, some of those general laws and properties of matter which are made known to us *by universal experience*. Even in doing this, we think, they tacitly appealed to experience, and would have revolted as much as Dr. Brown himself at the idea of establishing abstract propositions, independent of the knowledge we already have of the external world. Nor are we much afraid that the apparent solemnity and formality of those demonstrations have deluded so many persons as Dr. Brown imagines, into the error which he is combating. D'Alembert would probably have been willing to let the *aforecited* argument run thus :—'since there is no reason, *that we know of*, why,' &c. This little clause would have rested the whole matter on experience, and have rendered Dr. Brown's lengthened strictures entirely unnecessary. Now we venture to say, that the French writer had a tacit condition of this kind in his mind, and supposed that every one of his readers had. Little prepared was he to expect, that the thunders of chemistry would be brought to bear on an argument, of which the application was meant to be confined solely and entirely to the measurement of weight and motion. The demonstrations of this nature given by all these writers were good enough for their purpose ; they were never intended to

be applied in any form whatever beyond the systems to which they were originally attached, and Dr. Brown himself has not uttered a hint that the mathematical superstructures erected upon them sustain the least injury from the unsoundness or incompleteness of the foundations. We are willing to allow, that the reasonings in question are merely verbal; that they are built on that very experience of which they seem to preclude the necessity; and that they partake perhaps largely of that display, which is characteristic of the style of the modern continental mathematicians. But that they were ever brought forward under the least pretension of assuming ultimate metaphysical truths, we no more believe, than that the subsequent long and intricate demonstrations, founded upon them, were intended as models of oratorical argument. We protest against these quixotic digressions, in which writers in one science try by their own principles the writers in another. What would be thought of an astronomer, who should go far out of his way to overwhelm with confusion the compiler of an ephemeris, for heading his columns, in defiance of the demonstrated truth of the Copernican system, with *sun rises* and *sun sets*? Had our author shewn in a few words, as he might have done, and in a passing way, that the language of mathematicians, if received without due caution, in its whole metaphysical extent, is not strictly true, he would have fully answered his object in the treatise before us, and furnished a very appropriate and sufficient illustration of the necessity of *experience*, in predicting the usual phenomena of matter. But to devote eighty pages of unrelenting and triumphant ratiocination against mathematicians, and that too in the forced character of metaphysicians, was by far too much. We would rather have seen the same space expended on those glaring faults of style, that carelessness, that obscurity, that pomp and exuberance of demonstration where all is plain, that obstinate silence or oracular brevity on points of intrinsic difficulty, and, in short, that total deficiency of rhetorical skill,\* which have

\* It is our most serious belief, that a new chapter is wanted, in Campbell's *Philosophy*, and other treatises of *Rhetoric*, which shall prescribe rules for writing works on the mathematics. Thus, one rule might be, not to sum up the doctrine of surds in the most concise manner possible, and as if the object were only to refresh the memories of veteran mathematicians, while pages were devoted to the easiest and most self-evident portions of the doctrine of plus and minus.



made the elementary treatises of so many mathematicians but sealed books to numberless students, who have reluctantly and desperately sunk into the mortifying conclusion, that they were not born for the mathematics, when the truth of the case was, they were not born to understand writers, who studied not, or knew not how to express themselves.

We have before hinted at our author's doctrine, which makes *intuitive* and *irresistible* belief to be the basis, after experience, of our idea of causation. His view of it is this; whatever antecedent we have observed to have immediately and uniformly preceded any consequent, we *cannot possibly avoid believing* will precede it again and always, when placed in exactly the same circumstances. This belief is just as natural to us as to perceive external things, when they are presented to our senses. The following extract contains the amount of the argument brought to prove this point.

‘Perception, Reasoning, Intuition, are the only sources of belief; and if, even after experience,—for experience is in every case necessary,—when we believe the similarity of future sequences to the past which we have observed. it is not from perception, nor from reasoning, that our confidence is derived; we must ascribe it to the only other remaining source. We certainly do not perceive *power*, in the objects around us, or in any of our internal feelings; for perception, as a momentary feeling, is limited to what is, and does not extend to what is yet to be: and, as certainly, we do not discover it by reasoning; for, independently of our irresistible belief itself, there is no argument that can be urged to show, why the future should exactly resemble the past, rather than be different from it in any way. We believe the uniformity, in short, not because we can demonstrate it to others or to ourselves, but because it is impossible for us to disbelieve it. The belief is in every instance intuitive; and intuition does not stand in need of argument, but is quick and irresistible as perception itself.’ p. 314.

Another of the author's finest passages is the following, which is brought to defend and illustrate his peculiar views of this subject, and closes the third part of the work. It will evince, moreover, how far his speculations were from those atheistical tendencies, of which they have been suspected.

‘That, with a providential view to the circumstances in which we were to be placed, our Divine Author has endowed us with

certain instinctive tendencies, is as true, as that he has endowed us with reason itself. We feel no astonishment in considering these, when we discover the manifest advantage that arises from them; and of all the instincts, with which we could be endowed, there is none that seems, I will not say so advantageous merely, but so indispensable for the very continuance of our being, as that which points out to us the future, if I may venture so to speak, before it has already begun to exist. It is wonderful, indeed,—for what is not wonderful?—that the internal revelation which this belief involves, should be given to us, like a voice of ceaseless and unerring prophecy. But, when we consider who it was that formed us, it would, in truth, have been more wonderful, if the mind had been so differently constituted, that the belief had not arisen: because, in that case, the phenomena of nature, however regularly arranged, would have been arranged in vain; and that Almighty Being, who, by enabling us to anticipate the physical events that are to ensue, has enabled us to provide for them, would have left the creatures, for whose happiness he has been so bounteously provident, to perish, ignorant and irresolute, amid elements that seemed waiting to obey them,—and victims of confusion, in the very midst of all the harmonies of the universe.’ p. 319.

The Fourth and last Part is employed in an examination of Mr. Hume’s Theory of our Belief of the Relation of Cause and Effect. If our readers will lend their attention to a few succeeding statements, they will perhaps find that clear ideas of Mr. Hume’s Philosophy have not hitherto prevailed, and that Dr. Brown’s system of Cause and Effect, although corresponding with a portion of Mr. Hume’s, yet departs as widely as possible from it on every exceptionable point. We shall take considerable pains to set these assertions in a convincing light;—both because we regret to have learned, that an opinion was not long since entertained by most illustrious authority on the other side of the water, that Dr. Brown had been endeavouring to set up a theory of causation, which was ill-understood by himself, and which differed not materially from the theory of Hume,—and because, as our author is now laid where he cannot reply to one surmise against the soundness and correctness of his writings, we would try, with at least as fond a reverence as strangers may be supposed capable of, to efface every stain that may unjustly attach to his literary reputation.

Mr. Hume commenced the statement of his views on this  
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subject by reviving some hints that former writers had suggested as to the doctrine of a *conjunction*, rather than a *connexion* of the events that are constantly succeeding one another in the world of nature around us. In this simple doctrine, how much alarm soever a mistatement or a misapprehension of it may have once excited, there was not the semblance of a dangerous tendency. It still left the existence of every object and every event in nature as real and as certain as they were before. In resolving those incessant changes, that are every where happening, into a long train of antecedents and consequents, it did not deny, but rather confirmed the necessity of an antecedent for every consequent, and thus furnished a strong argument for the existence of some great First Cause—some necessary antecedent of all the effects in the universe. It still left to this great invisible Being the ability to will into existence every substance that is, and the wisdom of *arranging* that eternal continuity of successive phenomena, which is all the time developing such astonishing results of order, harmony, beauty, and happiness. There was nothing truly sceptical about this doctrine, if by *sceptical* we mean any quality of an opinion, which fairly leads to an irreligious conclusion. The question related purely to a physical matter of fact, which, whatsoever way decided, leaves all the great truths of natural and revealed religion as sacredly guarded as they were before. As for philosophy, *she* certainly had a right to demand the evidence for that supposed invisible link, which connects each change with the substance that produces it. On the absence of that evidence, Hume, trusting to the evidence of the senses which God had given him, and perceiving by those senses nothing more than a succession of changes, advances his leading doctrine, that we can have no other idea of causation, than a bare precession of one event to another, without involving any thing that intervenes between the antecedent and consequent. Dr. Brown, perceiving the strong ground of nature and the senses on which Hume stood, embraces the doctrine, states and defends it at much length in the First Part of this treatise, insists that every new link which is discovered between the two parts of a sequence, such for instance as an inflammable gas between the heat of yon candle and the combustion of this pen, becomes only a new unlinked antecedent to the visible effect ;—and not only this, but in his

Second Part, assigns several satisfactory reasons why the world should have been so long deceived in imagining, and giving a name to a nonentity.

The next doctrine of Hume was equally free from the character of scepticism. It was, that the human mind has no capacity of predicting, previously to experience, the particular consequents that will result from any given antecedent, or in other words, that we are unable of ourselves to divine any of the powers of nature. It required but little reflection to adopt this opinion, which, to our minds, is perfectly independent of the former doctrine, and might be true, whatever theory of causation be so. Accordingly, Dr. Brown, as we have seen, in his Third Part, maintains that experience alone is the ground of those predictions which we are every day forming of the future effects of objects now existing around us. Thus far our two philosophers go along together. But from this point they separate; they diverge widely and irrecoverably. Having hitherto agreed with each other; when they come to ask, *on what principle of the human mind we predict, after experience, the consequences of causes*, Dr. Brown answers the question—*by intuitive and irresistible belief*. On thrusting this pen into the candle's blaze, we believe it will burn; but we arrive at this belief, not from any process of reasoning, but because, having before seen the same effect proceed from the same cause, *we cannot help believing it*. This simple and clear statement of an ultimate fact, so consonant to the most approved rules of the Baconian philosophy, terminates Dr. Brown's system. And whether that system be right or wrong, we do earnestly crave leave to insist, that if ever there was one, which deserved the appellations of intelligible, compact, consistent, simple, this is the one. Even before Dr. Brown wrote, we were confessedly all in the dark about causation. He does not pretend to reveal the mystery of it to us, but only to check our impatient and unavailing struggles after a figment of our own fancy, to exhibit the limits of the human mind on this subject, and to confine our reasoning and imagination entirely to the visible side of the curtain of our existence, on which are wrought no other figures, nay, out of which peeps not a thread, but those of experience. If the author himself was so unfortunate as not to understand his own system, he certainly has had the signally good success of causing *some* readers; humble, and

without authority, we allow, but as conscientiously attentive to the train of his reasonings as their capacities would admit of ; to comprehend it to their most entire satisfaction. Nor, until we find some hint in his writings, or learn of some declaration that passed his mouth, revealing a consciousness of the unintelligibility of his speculations, can we possibly conceive or believe that he did not understand them himself.

Let us now turn to Mr. Hume, and see if he has really gained in our author an implicit and unqualified follower.

Instead of allowing, or perhaps perceiving the force and authority of that great principle of intuitive belief which terminates Dr. Brown's speculations, he lays a world of stress on the following maxim, which in hands as dexterous as his own, may lead into the most licentious, extravagant, and dangerous scepticism.

‘In all reasonings from experience, there is a step taken by the mind, which is not supported by any argument or process of the understanding.’

At the enunciation of this portentous proposition, the mind involuntarily stands aghast. All the realities and well grounded expectations of life seem to be sinking, like fragments of floating ice, under our feet. The truth of the proposition itself you cannot deny ; that is, if you allow that the business of life is carried on by ‘reasonings from experience.’ It is but too evident that from no quarter on earth have we gotten the information that *the future will resemble the past*, which is the assumed step that Hume refers to. Hence one feels that one has no right to introduce that assumption into any reasoning which is to guide his future operations. The consequence is, he may proceed to beat his head against a rock, with all the calmness in the world, and still be a very reasonable man ; and why ? Why, he has no right to assume that *the future will resemble the past* ! and therefore the rock may in all possibility meet his head with the softness of a pillow of down. A wanton assassin may be justified in rushing out of his den, and stabbing a whole virtuous population one by one through the body ; because, if he supposes that his dagger will sever their souls from their mortal tenements, he most illogically and unrighteously assumes a step in his reasoning, for which he has no authority, viz : that *the future will resemble the past*. Not to multiply examples of this kind,

which must press on the imaginations of our readers as numerously as on our own, we will yet instance only religion, which, by the magical waving of this dialectic wand, is made to evaporate into air, along with all other solid realities. For why should you rely on any one attribute of Jehovah; why should you trust in his mercy, hope for his bounty, pray for his blessing, nay, expect his existence or your own one moment longer, since in so doing you assume that step for which you have no imaginable authority, which is, that the future will resemble the past?

This is the slough to which Hume would conduct us. It seems a cruel fatality, that the man who has taken off the bandage from our eyes, by which we might have been betrayed into the midst of this miry scepticism, and who has shown us the rock on which we may safely and surely rest our foot far from this side of the horrible results of the above maxim of Mr. Hume, should have been suspected of coinciding in the main with that lubricious philosopher. Brown asserts that we expect an effect to follow any given cause, or the future to resemble the past, only in consequence of *an irresistible and intuitive belief*, which God has wrought into our very constitutions, and which we can no more avoid than we can avoid perceiving a visible object when we open our eyes. Hence, the mind of itself assumes no step in the above-mentioned reasonings, if reasonings there be; it is God himself who assumed it, when he so created us, that there should be a perfect correspondence between our own minds and the onward progress of rolling events around us. From this view of the subject, not one dangerous or shocking consequence flows. It utterly excludes the idea of an arbitrary or unappointed arrangement of things, since we find, in millions of instances, events to take place according to our expectations, and in the few instances where they do not, it is in consequence of the error of our expectations, arising from a limited experience. So far, moreover, from its involving scepticism, it is but too plain that it justifies and encourages a universal and confident belief, as directly opposite to scepticism as pole to pole. And as to exciting any distrust towards the Deity, or any irreligious affections whatever, we have already learned in the beautiful passage which closes the abstract of the Third Part of this book, that in impressing on our minds this unavoidable, this instinctive belief, the

Deity has manifested for us a signal tenderness, which must touch every susceptible heart. When we recollect, that, were it not for this truly vital principle in our mental constitution, we must every moment be liable to be crushed by the masses and powers that are resistlessly moving by, or are at work all around us ; that we must be constantly exposed to being caught in the wheels of that mighty machinery, whose operations we can now intuitively predict ; or that we must sit still and starve amidst this world of plenty and joy into which we are born ; we may literally say of our Creator with Moses, *as an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord hath condescended to take care of his creature man.*

Yet Mr. Hume, writhing beneath the tortures of his own absurd conclusions, sets about with all his metaphysical might to extricate himself from them, although in so doing, he only wanders still further from Dr. Brown, and plunges still deeper into the mire.

Instead of resorting, at once, with our author, to an ultimate principle of our mental constitution, an intuitive belief, which would have untied the knot that puzzled him, he makes the affair of *the gratuitous step* in our reasonings from experience, a very intricate process, which he would explain to the following effect, as summed up by our author.

‘ When two objects have been frequently observed in succession, the mind passes readily from the idea of one to the idea of the other : from this tendency to transition, and from the greater vividness of the idea thus more readily suggested, there arises a belief of the relation of cause and effect between them ; the transition in the mind itself, being the impression, from which the idea of the necessary connexion of the objects, as cause and effect, is derived.’ p. 391.

We can afford but some very short commentaries on this passage, which will, however, be sufficient to demonstrate its astonishing absurdity, and will still further evince that Hume and Dr. Brown do not go hand in hand so affectionately together.

1. Hume begins, ‘ when two objects have been frequently observed in succession,’ &c. He here implies, that we do not expect that one thing is the cause of another, or that the

antecedent will again produce the consequent, or in other words, that the future will resemble the past, until after *repeated* observations of the sequence. But our belief arises on a *single* observation, according to Dr. Brown, who instances a vast number of cases in which there can be no doubt, such as the stinging of a bee for the first time, or the smell of a new flower, which we immediately believe will in all future time produce the same effects. Our author reconciles to his principle those cases which seem to contradict it; but we must not stop to show how. The difference between the two authors is our principle object here.

2. 'The mind,' continues Mr. Hume, 'passes readily from the idea of the one to the idea of the other.' There is something so hypothetical, so unphilosophical, in this assumption, that we need not contrast it with our author's simple open theory of *immediate and intuitive belief*. Surely there is some difference between stating an ultimate intellectual operation, as Brown has done, without attempting to explain it, and gratuitously representing the mind as skipping backward and forward from idea to idea, as a bird does from twig to twig.

3. One would have thought the preceding assertion of Mr. Hume quite shadowy enough; but next comes a statement, which is more evanescent and impalpable than even the shadow of a shade. 'From this tendency to transition, and from the greater vividness of the idea thus more readily suggested, there arises a belief of the relation of cause and effect between them.' Whoever can grasp the meaning of this *tendency*, and then combine it, some how or other, with the *vividness of an idea*, so that the union of the two together shall make up the operation of belief, must be blessed with a truly metaphysical genius. Even on the supposition that the statement is clear and intelligible, our author demonstrates its falsity by a long course of arguments, combatting particularly the error that the *vividness* of an idea is essential even to the strongest belief. This is at least a *third* minor difference.

4. 'The transition in the mind itself, being the impression, from which the idea of the necessary connexion of the objects, as cause and effect, is derived.' A *transition* in the mind, an *impression* on the mind!—a high absurdity. Yet this is the very keystone of the theory which would explain our expectations of the future, or our belief in causation, on any other principle than *intuitive* belief.



We leave this passage now to the reflections and the judgment of our readers, and will not attempt to abstract more copiously the hundred pages, in which our author exposes its fallacies, its assumptions, its absurd consequences on the one hand, its inconclusiveness on the other, and the various theories and considerations brought to defend it. The whole topic is somewhat of an excrescence on the simple exposition of the theory before us. The author himself indeed somewhere apologises for its introduction, by observing that Mr. Hume's opinions on the subject have had so powerful an influence on this abstruse but very important part of physical science, that it would be injustice to his merits, to consider them only with incidental notice, in a work that is chiefly reflective of the lights which he has given. We will therefore fill up the space allowed us, by extracting a masterly sketch of Mr. Hume's character, as a metaphysical writer. Every reader, we presume, will thank us for the exchange.

‘That he was an acute thinker, on those subjects to which the vague name of Metaphysics is commonly given, there was, probably, no one, even of his least candid antagonists, who would have ventured to deny. That he was also an exact and perspicuous metaphysical writer, has been generally admitted, but it has been admitted, chiefly as a consequence of the former praise, or from the remembrance of powers of style, which, in many other respects, he unquestionably possessed. We think of him, perhaps, as an historian, while we are praising him as a metaphysician; or in praising him as a metaphysician, we think of qualities, necessary indeed for the detection of error, but different from those which the development of the system of truths of an abstruse and complicated science peculiarly requires.

‘In the philosophy of mind, where the objects are all dim and fleeting, it is the more necessary to remedy, as much as possible, by regular progressive inquiry, and methodical arrangement, and precision of terms, the uncertainty that might otherwise flow from the shadowy nature of the inquiry itself. The speculations of Mr. Hume, however, as I conceive, are far from being marked with this sort of accuracy. The truths, which his acuteness is quick to find and to present to us, rather flit before our eyes in gleamy coruscation, than fling on the truths which follow them that harmonizing lustre, which makes each in progressive illumination more radiant by the brightness that preceded it, and more fit therefore to reflect new radiance on the brightness which is to follow. The genius of his metaphysical style,—discursive and

rapid, and sometimes in consequence of that very rapidity of transition, slow in its general results, from the necessity of recurring to points of inquiry that have been negligently abandoned,—is not of the kind that seems best fitted for close and continuous investigation : and though, in the separate views which he gives us of a subject, we are often struck with the singular acuteness of his discernment, and as frequently charmed with an ease of language, which, without the levity of conversation, has many of its playful graces, still, when we consider him as the expositor of a theory, we are not less frequently sensible of a want of rigid order and precision, for which subtlety of thought and occasional graces of the happiest diction are not adequate to atone.

‘It is when we wish to unfold a system of truths, that we are most careful to exhibit them progressively, in luminous order : for, in the exposure of false opinions, the error, whatever it may be, which we wish to render manifest, may often be exhibited as successfully, by varied views of it in its different aspects, as by the closest analytical investigation. The want of strict, continuous method in some of the theoretical parts of Mr. Hume’s metaphysical essays,—in which we discover more easily what he wishes us not to believe, than what he wishes us positively to believe, or in which, at least, the limits of the doubtful and the true are not very precisely defined to our conception,—may thus, perhaps, in part be traced to the habits of refined scepticism, in which it seems to have been the early and lasting passion of Mr. Hume’s mind to indulge. It was more in the detection of fallacies in the common systems of belief, than in the discovery of truths, which might be added to them, that he loved to exercise his metaphysical ingenuity ; or, rather, the detection of fallacies was that species of discovery of truth, in which he chiefly delighted. There is, indeed, a calm, yet ever wakeful scepticism of an inquisitive mind, which has nothing in it that is unfavourable, either to closeness of reasoning in the discovery of truth, or to exactness of theoretical arrangement, in the communication of it to others. Such a spirit is even so essential to every sort of intellectual inquiry, that the absence of it in any one may be considered as a sufficient proof, that he has not the genius of a metaphysician : for the science of metaphysics, as it regards the mind, is, in its most important respects, a science of analysis ; and we carry on our analysis, only when we suspect that what is regarded by others as an ultimate principle, admits of still finer evolution into principles still more elementary. It is not, therefore, by such doubts as have only further inquiry in view, that the intellectual character is in any danger of being vitiated : but there is a very great difference between

the scepticism which examines every principle, only to be sure that inquiry has not terminated too soon, and that which examines them, only to discover and proclaim whatever apparent inconsistencies may be found in them. Astonishment, indeed, is thus produced ; and it must be confessed, that there is a sort of triumphant delight in the production of astonishment, which it is not easy to resist, especially at that early period of life,\* when the love of fame is little more than the love of instant wonder and admiration. But he who indulges in the pleasure, and seeks, with a sportful vanity of acuteness, to dazzle and perplex, rather than enlighten, will find, that though he may have improved his quickness of discernment, by exercises of nice and unprofitable subtlety, he has improved it at the expense of those powers of patient investigation, which give to dialectic subtlety its chief value.

‘The perpetual consideration of the insufficiency of all inquiry, as deduced from inconsistencies which may seem to be involved in some of our principles of belief, is more encouraging to indolence than to perseverance. By representing to us error, as the necessary termination of every speculative pursuit, it seems, at every moment, to warn us not to proceed so far ; and tends, therefore, to seduce the faculties into a luxurious slothfulness of occupation, which prefers a rapid succession of brilliant paradoxes, to truths of more extensive and lasting utility, but of more laborious search.

‘To shew that it is not from any logical inference, or direct induction, we have derived many of those opinions which, by the very constitution of our nature, it is impossible for us not to hold, and which have been formed without any thought of their origin, requires indeed superior perspicuity, but does not require any process of long continued reasoning. The very habit of ratiocination is thus apt to yield to a love of briefer exercises of discursive subtlety ; and this tendency, when the scepticism relates to moral and religious subjects, is still increased by the popular odium attached to infidelity, in those great articles of general belief,—an odium, which may naturally be supposed to induce the necessity, in many cases, of exhibiting subjects only by glimpses, and of hinting, rather than fully developing and enforcing a proof.

‘A mind that has long been habituated to this rapid and lively species of remark, and that has learned to consider all inquiries as of doubtful evidence, and their results therefore as all equally or nearly equally satisfactory or unsatisfactory, does not readily

\* ‘We are told by Mr. Hume, that the Treatise on Human Nature was projected by him before he had left college.’

submit to the regularity of slow disquisition. It may exhibit excellencies, for which we may be immediately led to term it, with the justest commendation, acute, or subtle, or ingenious : but it will not be in many cases that there will be reason to ascribe to it that peculiar quality of intellect, which sees, through a long train of thought, a distant conclusion, and, separating at every stage the essential from the accessory circumstances, and gathering and combining analogies as it proceeds, arrives at length at a system of harmonious truth. This comprehensive energy is a quality to which acuteness is necessary, but which is not itself necessarily implied in acuteness ; or rather it is a combination of qualities, for which we have not yet an exact name, but which forms a peculiar character of genius, and is, in truth, the very guiding spirit of all philosophic investigation.

‘ That a long indulgence in the ingenuities of scepticism, though it may improve mere dialectic acuteness, has a tendency to deaden, if I may so term it, the intellectual perception of the objects on which it is wisdom to rest, and, by flinging the same sort of doubtful light over truth and error, to make error often appear as worthy of assent as truth,—at least if the error happen to be in any doctrine of the sceptic himself,—is, I think, what our knowledge of some of the strongest principles of the mind might naturally lead us to expect. That the evil, of which I speak, is truly to be found in the metaphysical speculations of Mr. Hume, I may be wrong, indeed, in supposing ; but, if any part of his abstract writings be marked with it, there is none, I conceive, in which it is so conspicuous, as in those which relate to the subject that has been now under review. While he appears only as the combatant of error, in exposing the inadequacy of perception or mere reasoning to afford us directly any notion of the necessary connexion of events, it is impossible not to feel the force of the negative arguments which he urges, and equally impossible not to admire the acuteness and vigor of intellect which these display. But when, after these negative arguments, he presents to us opinions on the subject, which he wishes us to receive as positive truth, a very slight consideration is all that seems necessary to show, how strong the self-illusive influence must have been, that could make these opinions, unwarranted as they are by the evidence of observation or consciousness, appear to his own mind worthy of the credit which he expects to be given to them. It is fortunate for his intellectual character, that it is not as a dogmatist only, he has given us opportunities of knowing him. The minor theories involved in his doctrine of the origin of the notion of power, would certainly give a very unfavourable impression of his talents as a metaphysical inquirer ; if his reputa-

tion as a metaphysician were to be founded wholly on this or other positive doctrines maintained by him, and not on the acuteness with which, in many brilliant exercises of sceptical subtlety, he has exhibited what he wishes to be considered as errors in the systems of popular and scientific faith.' p. 338.

Before dismissing our author, we shall venture to offer one or two strictures on the leading doctrine and definition in his book.

We apprehend that both himself and Mr. Hume have overlooked an essential element which enters into our idea of a cause, and which, if introduced into their definition, would at least have made it more easily comprehended and received. *A cause*, Dr. Brown defines to be, *that which immediately precedes any change, &c.* This definition involves only *immediate succession*, or *proximity in time*. Is not *contiguity in place* equally a part of our notion of causation? Must not the antecedent in our idea be locally *present* with the consequent? It is an axiom, which, at its very first announcement, every body,—child—peasant—philosopher—believes and acknowledges, that no power can act where it is not present. It is true we have an idea of remote causes, as well as proximate causes. But every remote cause is always supposed to act upon something immediately near, and then that something to act upon another as immediately near it, and so on, till we arrive in idea to the proximate cause, which, to produce the last effect, is believed to be near it, even to immediate contiguity. We think that the omission of this idea has led Dr. Brown as well as Mr. Hume into considerable embarrassment, when they came to apply their principle to the innumerable *coexisting sequences* of phenomena, which at every moment are taking place throughout nature. They have both left that point in an unsatisfactory state, Mr. Hume to Dr. Brown, and Dr. Brown to us. If nothing more than immediate precession in time is admitted into our idea of causation, then, why is not the acorn, which is planted at the same time with the cherry-stone, regarded as the cause of the fruit-tree, as much as it is of the oak? Admit into your definition the necessary circumstance of immediate contiguity in place, as well as immediate precession in time, and you escape from this objection. We are aware that Dr. Brown has in a manner provided against it by a somewhat cumbrous and not

very easily comprehended paraphrase. After beginning his definition, by declaring a cause to be that which immediately precedes any change, he adds, *and which, existing at any time in similar circumstances, has been always, and will be always, immediately followed by a similar change.* We would not exclude this portion of the definition, but would only submit, whether the introduction of contiguity of place as well as proximity in time would not have imparted to the definition more precision, universality, and tangibility.

That this circumstance of *immediate contact* always forms part of our strict and simple notion of causation, the more we reflect upon it, the more we are inclined to believe. We wish, therefore, that Dr. Brown had called in this idea,\* and wrought it up throughout his treatise in his own admirable manner. It is possible, that in so wishing, we do not look round and through the subject with the comprehensive survey of thorough-going theorists. Yet we cannot but think, that the proposed improvement would have materially assisted him in keeping his main object in view, and prevented many laborious circumlocutions in fortifying his positions against a throng of difficulties and objections, that perpetually arose upon him as he advanced.

Our author in the definition before us, seems to us to have revealed just so much of the truth, as is conveyed in telling a man in what parallel of latitude his ship is sailing on the ocean. Had he brought in the circumstance of contiguity in place, we think that this would have been like drawing his line of longitude; it would have reduced the difficulty to a specific certain point, and given to our floating, mysterious idea of a cause a fixed, intelligible, and definite relation. Observe too, that the obnoxious notion of an *invisible link* would be equally excluded by this as by the other form.

What then would be *our* definition? *A cause is that which immediately precedes and is immediately present at any change.* If very hardly pushed, we might call in the closing phraseology of our author's definition. Yet we think we could do without it.

Will our readers briefly analyse this our definition along

\* When our author speaks of the term *bond of connexion* as being adopted to express proximity in time, it is remarkable that he did not perceive how much more appropriate it is to imply proximity in place. See page 407.

with us? Think of any change, any phenomenon whatever. Think now of an object or event which is in so close proximity to it as to exclude the contact of every thing else existing. If this object or event exist in this closest contiguity immediately previous to the change; what else is your idea of a *cause*?

We had intended to couple with this article a ‘Sketch of a System of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, Part First, comprehending the Physiology of the Mind.’ This work constitutes the outlines of a part of Dr. Brown’s Lectures, and was printed last year for the use of his pupils. But had time and the length of the foregoing article permitted us to notice this original and curious volume, an advertisement in England, announcing, as we have been informed, the publication of the author’s Lectures at large in four volumes, would have induced us to postpone our design.

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**ART. XXIII.**—*Ensayo de la historia Civil del Paraguay, Buenos-Ayres. y Tucuman, escrita por el doctor D. Gregorio Funes, dean de la Santa Iglesia Catedral de Cordova.*—Tom. 3. 8vo. Buenos-Ayres, 1816—1817.

**CAUSES**, into which we have not time now to enter much in detail, have prevented the momentous drama performing in South America from engaging its due share of the public interest in this country. It might have been thought that, to us at least in the United States, few subjects of a political nature would have awakened a wider sympathy, than the character and probable results of the contests for independence in the South. But it must not be forgotten that the practical statesman has very little concern with those feelings and associations, which belong, in a considerable degree, to the region of sentiment. That Buenos Ayres and Mexico are a part of our continent may suggest fine themes for general declamation and poetry is true; but if, notwithstanding this, our political and commercial relations with them are insignificant, compared with those we stand in with the European states; if it is of far more importance to us to command the respect of those, who bear sway on the banks of the Thames or of the Neva, than to be hailed as brethren along all the banks of the Amazon and the La Plata; and